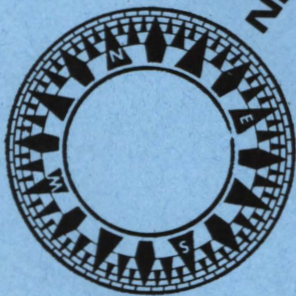

Edited by John Harney and John Rimmer

NEW DIRECTIONS FOR UFO RESEARCH BY PETER ROGERSON



EDITORIAL

The Right Road

The suggestions made by Peter Rogerson in this issue of the Bulletin on ways to improve and rationalise UFO research may be dismissed by many as utopian and unrealistic. If this is so it augurs ill for serious ufology, for the fact remains that Rogerson's suggestions outline little more than the minimum requirements for adequate study of any scientific problem. In a field as ill-defined as ufology is at present the need for an efficient data gathering, storage and retrieval system is vital. Unfortunately this is one of the more unglamorous aspects of ufological work, and few people are prepared to give up the dubious pleasures of skywatching and aimless speculating to undertake the painstakingly detailed work that this entails.

Rogerson calls for a determined effort to be made to prevent patently unsuitable people from investigating significant reports. It is this sort of suggestion that brings forth cries of 'dictatorship'; this is just nonsense. Every other scientific discipline, including the more 'fringe' ones, is able to maintain a realistic division between the serious students, even if they do hold unorthodox views, and the out-and-out crank. Perhaps most relevant to our point of view is the organisation of study in the field of psychic research. Here the SPR is able to maintain a quite serious, sensible corporate nature, and can be seen to be quite distinct from the various spiritualist and occultist groups who are operating in the same area. Unfortunately no such distinction exists in ufology at present. Here every spectrum of attitude is thrown together in the various societies and magazines. Until serious researchers can be organised, without the attention of the cranks (and this is beginning to happen, but by direct, private contact rather than through the irrelevant groups) and some of the suggestions, and more importantly, implications, contained in the Rogerson article can be implemented, ufology is destined to remain a fringe of a fringe of science. The implications of the UFO phenomenon to present day science are very significant, but they will never be thoroughly investigated so long as that phenomenon is attended by a raggle-taggle band of unscientific so-called investigators and 'groups'.

FUTURE DIRECTIONS FOR UFO RESEARCH

by Peter Rogerson

During the 25 years in which the UFO phenomenon has been in the arena of public and scientific debate there seems to have been little concerted effort to determine precisely what UFO researchers should be doing. Too often ufologists seem to have been more interested in propounding dotty pseudo-sciences than in investigating the phenomenon objectively.

What, then, should be done? Here are some suggestions for discussion:

1. There should be a major effort to document and re-investigate all Type I reports located in both published and unpublished sources, or known through private information. Every effort should be made to determine the precise date and geographical location of each report. Regular catalogues should be published. These should be

brief specific lists in geographical, chronological and other orders, backed up by a catalogue of report abstracts in strict chronological order. Continuation catalogues should be published annually, with cumulations every five years.

2. "Contact" reports, "MIB" reports and reports involving psychological, physiological and "parapsychological" phenomena should be investigated by trained personnel or laymen of proven reliability under the direction of specialists, and NOT by untrained or impressionable people.

3. There should be a major co-operative effort at a systematic search for pre-1947 "waves" involving, if possible, full scrutiny of national and local newspapers, and scientific and popular magazines, starting with flap periods, then other periods. The possibility of obtaining information from elderly persons could be considered. Reports should be published in abstract form, with fuller accounts of selected reports, and notes on the social, religious, political and scientific background of the reports. Otherwise reports should be published without comment.

4. There should be a continuing effort to examine, and to place into context, the UFO phenomenon as a source of mythological data, and as an aspect of folk-lore. The investigation of certain "constants" in mythical, religious and folkloric traditions should be encouraged.

5. There should be an effort made to conduct sociological and psychological study of the modern UFO cults, such as that at Warminster.

6. There should be a sociological and historical study of the social and technological impact of the UFO phenomenon. As an example, research is being conducted into the possibility that the 1913 "airship" wave may have had some effect on the course of the First World War.

7. The local groups, unless they are conducting valid research in which the majority of the membership is involved, should dissolve themselves. Their active members should meet informally to discuss reports, plan investigation and conduct research.

8. The national organisations should cease to act as bodies with corporate opinions, planning research etc., and become documentation centres, co-ordinating research, holding central catalogues and files, and library facilities. They should organise symposia and provide resources for publication of research work.

9. There should be a private international co-ordinating body, to which both national bodies and individuals would be affiliated. This body would provide both international co-ordination of documentation and research, and a translation service. It is important that neither the national nor international bodies should hold corporate opinions or engage in corporate activities.

10. There is need for the creation of high quality bibliographical services in the field of ufology. These should include a bibliography of all UFO-style reports in the press, and non-ufological books and journals, a bibliography of UFO monographs published to date, an index of important articles in the ufological and lay press, and as complete a list as possible of ufological

journals.

11. The creation of a machine-readable general catalogue of UFO reports incorporating all existing catalogues, on an international scale.

12. The publication of this catalogue, with the addition of a legible, standardised abstracts of the reports in the form of a continuous, duplicated publication partwork, to allow for further investigation of reports.

13. The publication of at least one international scientific journal devoted to ufology, aimed exclusively at the scientific community and serious research worker, without editorial comment. The journal should aim to serve as a platform for all serious workers, away from the attitude of the cultists. The ultimate aim should be to publish this journal simultaneously in several major languages.

14. The publication of national journals of a similar nature, either modifications of existing journals (eg Phenomenes Spatiaux, FSR) or new ventures, and the encouragement of the publication of local "report" journals.

15. Rapid and in-depth investigation of all cases involving alleged physical evidence, landing sites and photographs by appropriately qualified experts. In the case of photographs, publication should be delayed until there is good evidence of "high strangeness", and attempts at duplication have failed.

16. Efforts should be made to recover material in official files, accepting any conditions laid down, especially recognising that such material may be made available only to reputable scientists.

17. It should be recognised that the only legitimate activity of UFO research is the scientific investigation of UFO reports and phenomena which may generate them. Such investigations should be impartial, unbiased and covering all aspects of the phenomenon. Investigations which set out to demonstrate that the reports are generated by mirages, alcoholic poisoning, space ships or ghosts do not fall into the definition of research.

18. Make every effort to channel the interest of newcomers to the subject along scientific lines, emphasising that ufology involves much more than standing on hilltops staring at the sky, and like much science involves hard work.

19. Take steps to counter the damage caused by the activities of certain sensationalists, particularly the gentlemen whose lunacies provide much sport to the popular press.

20. Recognise that the subject will only become respectable to the scientific community if research and speculation are conducted in a scientific manner; and that speculation is limited to scientifically valid notions. One must accept that this speculation will be ultimately futile if the phenomena are not comprehensible in terms of 20th century science. The tendency of writers to throw scientific restraints away and invent ever more fantastic pseudo-scientific cognosces can only be deplored.

The majority of these proposals are within reach, as the foundations exist already. The major stumbling block is undoubtedly certain vested interests in the UFO groups, and sheer apathy. For example, the attempt at proposal 10 by John Rimmer and Conrad Hunter failed because no-one was interested.

At present this writer is engaged upon project 1, the compilation of a card catalogue of Type I reports, at present containing just under 1900 items and still slowly growing. I urge researchers engaged upon similar activities to contact me. I would also request readers to send details of any unpublished reports (whether personal information or from organisation files) or reports ill-published, for example in short lived or low circulation UFO journals.

Research under proposal 4 will be published from time to time also. Comments and criticism on any of these proposals, and information about any of them which may be in progress will be welcome.

Book Review

LEGEND OF THE SONS OF GOD by T.G.Lethbridge, Routledge & Kegan Paul, £1.75

In this book Mr Lethbridge, the author of several books on parapsychology, advances the now familiar theory that various legends and ancient structures are connected with prehistoric visits by extraterrestrials. However this book is different from most others in this field in that the author is a trained archaeologist and so avoids the many inaccuracies and mis-statements often found in books of this nature. While this is certainly a welcome change, unfortunately, once these inaccuracies are abandoned what is left of the case for extraterrestrial colonists is pretty inconclusive. A new element is added by Mr Lethbridge's belief that the alien beings built the megalithic circles of Britain and charged them with a mysterious force which guided their craft and which Mr Lethbridge claims can still be detected with a dowser's pendulum. (This seems to be rather similar to the ideas of John Michell and the ley hunters, of whom Mr Lethbridge seems to be unaware.) While I am not competent to judge the reality or otherwise of dowsing one would think that an obvious experiment would be for another dowser with no knowledge of Lethbridge's results to survey the same monuments and see if he responded in the same spots. However, no controlled experiment of this type is recorded and so there seems to be no real evidence that Mr Lethbridge's pendulum is responding to anything but his own subconscious muscular impulses.

— Roger Sandell

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